

Beer Garden offers festive place to unwind

By Ming Rodrigues
Emerald Contributor

It's been a part of the University for some time now, but it's more popular than ever, and it doesn't cost much to join in the fun.

Could it be the elective to see you through to making the grade toward graduation? Perhaps — if you know how to relax and take a break from the usual academic grind.

Sound too good to be true? Then just stop by the EMU cafeteria (next to the Fountain Court) tonight and almost every Friday evening and see what the credits for a weekly course on live music, buzzing conversation, and low-priced, even free, refreshments are worth.

The Beer Garden, the campus watering hole which opens its first night of the year this evening, has been keeping students, faculty and staff happy with its deal on budget entertainment for 20 years. The only prerequisite: you must be at least 21-years-old.

It's conveniently located so you don't have to step off campus to unwind. It offers a timely respite (4-7 p.m.) from a week of academic overload. And it accommodates 300-400 revelers, far more than the average bar or tavern possibly can.

And what more could you ask for when there's no cover charge for the live bands, free chips and salsa (4-5 p.m.), and the \$1.75 or less deal on a 16-ounce serving of beer on tap. On top of that, if you use your refillable 12-ounce mugs, one dollar is all you will pay.



Courtesy Photo
Local band Red Over White will dish out some good old fashioned rock 'n' roll tonight at the Beer Garden in the EMU Cafeteria.

Furthermore, something new on the Beer Garden menu this year is specialty micro beer. At

students to get together, enjoy one another's company and just simply relax," said Dennis

and usually from there they make plans for the rest of the evening."

'We are very selective about the bands we contract to perform at the Beer Garden in that we try to give patrons a variety of bands, each with their own sound'

— Christine Baker

\$2 a cup, this is for those with a discerning taste for the brew.

"The Beer Garden provides a nice social break, especially for

Carr, EMU food services director. "It's a casual, social setting where often you get groups of people running into each other,

The Beer Garden is jointly sponsored by the EMU Cultural Forum, which coordinates the live entertainment, and the

EMU Food Services, which pays for the bands and arranges the weekly set-up, drinks and munchies.

It originally started in the EMU Ballroom before renovations relocated it to the cafeteria, where patrons could better mingle and have fun in a smaller, more controlled environment.

But while letting it all hang out and having a good time may be the only thing on the minds of patrons at the Beer Garden, Carr said another primary role of the Beer Garden is to "provide a forum where students can engage in socially responsible consumption of alcohol in a controlled, responsible setting."

And toward that priority, all I.D. is checked before anyone is allowed to enter, the Beer Garden is put on hold when there are high school or major conferences going on at the EMU, and even the free chips are served unsalted as part of the policy not to put a premium on beer consumption. The emphasis, in other words, is on having good, clean fun.

And so far, the no-nonsense, bottom-line has worked. Carr said he hasn't encountered any trouble at the Beer Garden. Along with its rules is its other goal, as with any business, and that is to draw in the crowds.

Each year, a survey is conducted to see what more patrons want out of the Beer Garden. During the year, promotional and special events like comedy nights may be held,

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